DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 193 179 SP 016 688

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TITLE Need and Proficiency of Teacher Competencies as Perceived by Student Teachers vs Practicing Professional Teachers.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; Elementary Secondary Education; Individual Instruction; *Needs Assessment; Program Evaluation; *Self Evaluation (Individuals); Student Evaluation; Student Motivation; Student Teacher Relationship; *Student Teachers; Teacher Administrator Relationship; Teacher Education; *Teacher Effectiveness; *Teachers

ABSTRACT

This study compares the perceptions of student teachers and veteran teachers toward a selected set of competencies. It determines the degree of need judged by teachers for each competency and the level of proficiency they feel they have attained. Fifteen competencies were listed on the questionnaire submitted to participants in the study. Student teachers responded to the questionnaire before and after their teaching experience. Practicing professionals responded once. A consistency of feelings as to the need for competency in classroom management, student motivation, individualizing instruction, and evaluation techniques was found at all levels of experience. The implications of these findings for teacher education programs are discussed. (JD)

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ED193179

Need and Proficiency of Teacher Competencies as Perceived by Student Teachers vs Practicing Professional Teachers

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SP 016688

Need and Proficiency of Teacher Competencies as Perceived by Student Teachers vs Practicing Professional Teachers

This study compares the perceptions of student teachers and practicing professionals toward a selected set of teacher competencies. It determines the degree of need judged by teachers for each competency and the level of proficiency the teachers feel they have attained. Prior to the study the researchers assumed that there would be significant differences in the perceptions of needs and proficiencies of both novice teachers (student teachers) and veteran teachers (more than two years' experience).

This study was generated as a result of the Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument used to assess beginning teachers in the State of Georgia. The major areas of assessment as outlined by the instrument are: Planning Instruction, Managing Instruction, Providing the Learning Environment, Evaluating, and Being a Professional. (1978).

The competencies used in this study were generated by Bowling Green University to evaluate its teacher education graduates (1978). Fifteen competencies were selected from that list which represent areas of the Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument and are used as the basis of this study.

Procedures:

Fifty veteran teachers were administered the questionnaire. The average teaching experience was 5.7 years. The sample included twenty-four elementary teachers, fourteen middle school (junior high) teachers and twelve secondary teachers. They represented rural, suburban and urban teacher settings.

The twenty student teachers chosen for this study represented the same three levels of teaching and environmental background in schooling.

All student teachers were asked to respond to the competency statements both before and after an eleven week student teaching experience. The veteran teachers were given the questionnaire only once.

These subjects were asked to respond to the competency statements in two ways: (1) Their need for the competency and (2) Their proficiency in the competency area. Table I shows the response format of the questionnaire.

TABLE 1

Teacher Questionnaire Response Format

Need - What is the extent to which this competency is needed by you in your classroom situation?

1. Not applicable
2. Not needed
3. Little
4. Moderate
5. Extensive

Proficiency - What do you consider to be your proficiency concerning this competency?

1. Not proficient
2. Limited
3. Adequate
4. More than adequate
5. Extensive

Results:

Table II lists the fifteen competency statements used in this study. The competency statements are listed by rank of the veteran teachers. Rank was determined by the perception of need and proficiency derived from responses on the questionnaire response sheet from the most needed and proficient (1) to least needed and proficient (15). Ranks were derived from ordering the mean scores for the sample. Identical procedures were used to determine priorities

of student teachers before and after their practice teaching experience.

Information presented in Table II shows that the greatest need indicated by the groups was the "ability to maintain order in a classroom and to assist students in the development of self-discipline." All groups (veteran teachers, pre-student teachers and post-student teachers) ranked this need "extensive" or "moderate". Experience tended to show a greater awareness of this need. The veteran teachers as well as students ready to practice teach thought they were adequate in their proficiency of classroom management (rank 8). However, once practice teaching was completed, prospective teachers felt very confident of their proficiency to handle management problems (rank 3).

A Spearman Rho correlation between all groups (veteran teachers, pre-student teaching, post-student teaching) on both need and competency yielded the following coefficient as reported in Table III.

Table III

	C-1	C-2	C-3	C-4	C-5
C-2	.104				
C-3	.788 **	.259			
C-4	.332	.624 *	.382		
C-5	.825 **	.402	.784 **	.416	
C-6	.614 *	.653 *	.646 *	.569 *	.813 **

C-1 Pre-student Teaching Needs

C-2 Pre-student Teaching Proficiency

C-3 Veteran Teacher Needs

C-4 Veteran Teacher Proficiency

C-5 Post-student Teaching Needs

C-6 Post-student Teaching Proficiency

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

The rank of perceived needs is consistent with much of the literature available dealing with teacher needs. (Ingersoll, 1976) Significant relationships are shown in Table III that indicate agreement. (C-1, C-3) (C-1, C-5) (C-3, C-5). There is, however, a lack of consistency in rank in particular areas of proficiency. The relationship between veteran teacher needs and proficiency is slight. This would indicate that needs are perceived as a result of a lack of proficiency and would show little or no relationship. This supports previous studies (Bartos, 1980). However, the relationship between post-student teacher needs and proficiency was highly significant. (p .01) This would support Pigge findings of .83 correlation between needs and proficiency (1978).

Summary and Conclusions

The findings indicate that there is a consistency of feelings at varying levels of experience as to the basic needs prevailing in schools today. Management of classroom activities, motivation, the ability to individualize instruction and the development and application of evaluative techniques top the needs category collectively. There is less relationship with reference to proficiency. However, at all levels there seems to be a growing recognition of the lack of adequate training necessary to satisfy these recognized needs. This indicates the need for priorities in both undergraduate training institutions and public school in-service programs to also recognize these high need areas and establish programs to assist in developing higher levels of proficiencies.

What is most likely to be implied from these findings is that teacher preparation programs are just not doing the job. What else could explain the similarities existing between rookies and veterans? What might possibly explain the findings is that some teacher preparation programs are doing too good a job. Perhaps we are producing teachers who are so concerned with classroom management that everything else becomes secondary. After all, in a milieu where

problems of classroom discipline are glorified and magnified daily in the media and the teachers lounge, it is logical to guess that teachers will be first of all concerned with discipline. Of course, if classroom management is the first priority, with things like content, critical thinking and original thought somewhere down the line, the classroom might well become a rather boring place which leads us back to discipline problems. Perhaps if teachers were more concerned with content and critical thought, the problems of maintaining order would take care of themselves. Obviously the problem is much more complex, and this research serves merely to illustrate the findings. It should not be assumed that the message from this research is that more classroom management and behavior modification in teacher education programs is needed. It may in fact indicate that too much time has been spent on "order" at the expense of content.

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Table II

TEACHER COMPETENCIES

TEACHER COMPETENCIES	Veteran Teachers				Student Teachers (Pre)				Student Teachers (Post)			
	Need		Proficiency		Need		Proficiency		Need		Proficiency	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
1. Ability to maintain order in a classroom and to assist students in the development of self-discipline.	4.039	1	3.392	8	4.739	2	3.304	9	4.60	1	4.00	3
2. Ability to motivate student achievement via modeling, re-inforcement, provision of success experiences, and appeal to student interests.	3.941	2	3.313	11	4.565	3	3.348	8	4.45	6	3.80	
3. Ability to individualize instruction to meet the varying needs of students, via techniques such as mastery learning, alternative assignments, individual contracting, and group work.	3.901	3	3.039	14	4.478	4	3.043	14	4.50	3	3.85	7
4. Ability to encourage and facilitate the development of social skills and enhanced self-concept.	3.882	4	3.352	9	4.435	5	3.348	8	4.20	9	3.80	8
5. Ability to apply evaluative techniques appropriate to the student and classroom situation.	3.843	5	3.333	10	4.783	1	3.261	10	4.55	2	3.95	5

TABLE II (Continued)

	Veteran Teachers				Student Teachers (Pre)				Student Teachers (Post)			
	Need		Proficiency		Need		Proficiency		Need		Proficiency	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
6. Ability to provide instruction leading to the different cognitive goals of acquisition, comprehension, and application to knowledge.	3.823	6	3.823	1	4.435	5	3.435	5	4.20	9	3.80	8
7. Ability to construct performance/behavior objectives in your particular subject area.	3.764	7	3.411	7	3.957	12	3.783	1	4.30	8	4.00	3
8. Ability to continue the development and clarification of one's own philosophy of education	3.686	8	3.431	6	4.261	10	3.435	5	4.15	11	3.80	
9. Ability to utilize audio-visual equipment and materials in teaching	3.647	9	3.450	5	4.087	11	3.652	2	4.50	3	4.30	1
10. Ability to prepare teacher-made tests.	3.627	10	3.666	2	4.391	8	3.478	4	4.40	7	3.90	6
11. Ability to interpret and report student performance on teacher-made tests.	3.607	11	3.627	3	4.435	5	3.609	3	4.50	3	4.15	2
12. Ability to interpret and report student performance on standardized tests.	3.588	12	3.470	4	3.652	14	3.261	10	3.70	13	3.70	12

TABLE II (Continued)

	Veteran Teachers				Student Teachers (Pre)				Student Teachers (Post)			
	Need		Proficiency		Need		Proficiency		Need		Proficiency	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
13. Ability to utilize an understanding of the formal chain of control, decision making, communication and authority within each school unit and their effects upon the daily operation of the classroom	3.490	13	3.215	12	4.348	9	3.130	13	4.15	11	3.80	8
14. Ability to apply the basic principles of how schools are financed, sources of income and major areas of expenditure, and how these factors directly affect classroom operation.	3.313	14	2.70	15	3.826	13	3.174	12	3.55	15	3.30	14
15. Ability to understand the role of teacher organizations with the formal and informal competition for control of education and one's own personal role in joining or not joining such organizations.	3.196	15	3.078	13	3.478	15	3.043	14	3.65	14	2.85	15